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AN
ESSAY
FOR THE
Better REGULATION and IMPROVEMENT
OF
FREE-THINKING.

(Price One Shilling.)

1842

W. A. H.

ESSAYS

FOR THE

IMPROVEMENT



TEACHING

(1842-43)

A N
E S S A Y
FOR
The Better REGULATION
AND
IMPROVEMENT
OF
FREE-THINKING.
IN A
LETTER to a FRIEND.

*Mutemus Clypeos, Danaumque insignia nobis
Aptemus.* ————— VIRG.

THE SECOND EDITION.

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at the Crown Office, Strand.



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DEAR SIR,

THE Pleasure I received from your last obliging Letter, demands a better Acknowledgment than at present I am able to make. The Success of your Labours in the glorious Cause of Truth and Liberty, which you modestly call *surprising*, is by no means so to your Friends, who know and admire the shining Talents, the indefatigable Application, the engaging Address, and extensive Benevolence, by which you stand eminently distinguished among all true Lovers of Mankind. Who can wonder that Wit and Learning should triumph over the glaring Absurdities of Priest-craft and Superstition, when we see them daily become the Scorn

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and Contempt of the sillyest Part of the People? The visible Superiority of our Numbers, and Zeal for the Cause, the Indolence, or rather Diffidence of our Adversaries, and the impartial Neutrality of some who might, if they pleased, easily turn the Scale against us, are a comfortable Presage, that the Days of Reverend Dulness and Superstition are growing to a Period, and that we (or our Posterity, however) shall live to see this happy Island, in every Sense of the Word, *a Land of Liberty, a Nation of Philosophers, and fine Gentlemen*, delivered from the Tyranny of Priests, and Priest-ridden Politicians, and directed solely by *the infallible Light of Nature, the Rules of Right Reason, and the Laws of Honour*, and suffered to think and speak and act with that unlimited Freedom which is the distinguishing Privilege and Honour of *rational Creatures and free Agents*; for which, I trust, neither your Endeavours nor mine shall ever be wanting.

Tho' we cannot boast of the same Success in our Neighbourhood, yet we may venture to say in the main, that we are in a very hopeful Way, and improve as fast as the Nature of our Situation, and the Genius of the Country will admit. The lower Part of the People, with which, you know, we mostly abound, are of slender Talents, and slow Capacities, bred up from their Infancy to Superstition and Labour, and are not easily cured of their early Prejudices; they cannot enter into abstracted Notions and fine Reasonings; and therefore, still persist in
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having a sort of Reverence for *the Parson*, (except when he comes to talk upon the Article of Tythes;) they think it very convenient to have a Holy-day once a Week ; and that the Church is a very convenient Place to meet in, and shew their best Clothes, especially in rainy Weather, when they cannot so conveniently walk about the Fields, or travel about the Neighbourhood ; and therefore are startled at any thing that looks like an Attempt to unsettle the Religion of their Grandmothers. And tho' many of them, by conversing with their Betters, have made great Improvements, have attempted to break their Chains, and give into the Liberties of the polite World, yet can they not entirely conquer the inveterate Prejudices of Education and Custom: insomuch, that after they have been regaling all their Senses in the best Company and the most exquisite Enjoyments, yet, when they come to Retirement and cool Reflexions (as they call them) they grow splenetic and low-spirited, are terrified with dismal Apprehensions of a future Judgment, eternal Punishments, and I know not what, and fall to snivelling, repenting, and praying, after *breaking a Commandment*, as if they had been guilty of *breaking a Hedge, or the Peace*, and were in danger of being sent to *the House of Correction*. But however, there is great Hope that frequent Practice, and the Influence and Example of their Superiors, will, by Degrees, so far enlighten their Understandings, as to convince them, that it is neither Policy nor good Manners, for any Tenant to

pretend to be wiser or better than his Landlord, especially than the Lord of the Mannor; and that it is impossible for a poor Rascal that rents 20 or 30 *l. per annum*, to think and judge as properly of such intricate Subjects as the 'Squire, who is, perhaps, in the *Commission of the Peace, or the Militia*, rides in his Coach, and laughs at the Parson and his Preachments every Day of his Life.

And this has produced another lucky Consequence, which cannot fail, one time or other, of turning out greatly to our Advantage. Several of the younger and more polite Clergy, who are Candidates for Fame, or Promotion, or both, and find that very little of either is to be obtained by a stiff, sullen Adherence to the old-fashioned Schemes of Orthodoxy and Morality, think it their Interest to be more complaisant to those who have it in their Power to distinguish and prefer them; they find there is more to be got by being good Companions, than good Christians, and consider it as a Point of Policy, as well as good Breeding, not to interrupt Conversation when they are in Company with their Superiors; and whatever Subject happens to be started, or Liberties of Speech taken, by those who may have it in their power to mend or mar their Fortunes, they think it their best Way to *eat their Pudding and hold their tongues*, without pretending to be wiser than the rest of the Company. This has already had a good Effect, and has convinced Numbers of People, that either those Gentle-
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men do not really believe, or are not able to defend the Doctrines they pretend to teach, and therefore are already, or at least, in a fair Way to be of our Side of the Question. Our Friend, the 'Squire, made a Party t'other Night to meet at Parson G——'s, who, you know, has long had an Eye to his great Living at B——re. After the first Bottle, we naturally fell upon Politicks, with an easy Transition to Religion; we quickly grew warm, roasted *Athanasius*, and the whole Company of Creed-makers, with all the Patrons and Defenders of Revelation, Miracles, Mysteries, &c. The well-bred Doctor gave us no Interruption, offered at no Reply, but put about the Glass, which he never baulk'd when it came to his Turn. When the Company broke up, he made us a handsome Compliment, by assuring us, that his Silence was purely the Effect of his good Breeding. *Gentlemen, (said he) you may possibly be surpris'd that I have given no Interruption to this Conversation; you had not escap'd so, had it happened in any other Place; but I hold it to be an essential Point of good Breeding not to contradict any Gentleman in my own House.*

But notwithstanding all this, I cannot say that our Success has hitherto been such as we might reasonably expect from the apparent Goodness of our Cause, the Number, Weight and Zeal of its Advocates, and the feeble Opposition of our Adversaries. And it has cost me many an anxious Thought to discover, if possible, to what evil Fate or Misconduct we
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may charge our Ill-success, that we may be better able to guard against it for the future, and lay a solid and lasting Foundation for the Peace and Liberty of the next, if not of the present Generation.—— And the first great Reason that occurs to me is, our irregular immethodical Way of Proceeding. Method and Order are known and confessed to be the Life and Spirit of all regular Societies and great Designs, without which they can neither prosper nor subsist; their Prosperity, nay their very Being, depends upon certain regular Dispositions of Persons, Times and Places, for the better Execution of their Designs, and answering the Ends of their Institution; some are to command, others to obey; some to direct, others to submit to Direction. And it is the great Duty and Business of Directors, to judge of the Characters, Talents and Abilities of those who are fit to be employed in the several Branches of the Administration. And when, through an over-weening Conceit of their own Abilities, and a Contempt of the Judgment and Authority of their Superiors, private Persons shall presume wantonly to break out of their proper Circle, and thrust themselves into such Offices and Services, as they have neither Call, nor Talents, nor Skill to execute, it must infallibly end in the Damage and Confusion of the Society in general, and the Shame and Contempt of the officious Intruders. Do but consider the State of your own Family, and see how necessary it is for the Peace and Prosperity of the whole,

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that every one of your Domestics should have his proper Post assigned him, agreeable to his Talents, Education and Way of Life. Should *the Helper in the Stables* pretend to the Office of *Valet de Chambre*, the *Postilion* turn *Cook*, and the *Whipper* in resolve to be nothing less than *Steward* or *Butler*, I fancy neither *your Stables*, *your Kitchen*, *your Wardrobe*, nor *your Exchequer*, would long be in tolerable Order, your Family in tolerable Peace, nor your Worship in tolerable Humour.

To this it may be answered, That this Supposition does by no means affect our Case ; that we are not yet formed into a regular Society, and therefore have no direct Scheme to pursue ; that we are all upon the Offensive ; our Business is only to demolish and destroy ; and that very little Method or Order is required to effect it ; but that Strength and Courage seem sufficient : But this is a dangerous Mistake. There is an Art in demolishing as well as in building, to do it safely and effectually. He that should attempt to demolish an old Building, and should begin with digging up Foundations, and destroying the Pillars and Buttresses, will have good Luck if he does not *pull an old House upon his Head*.—— But our Case most nearly resembles the Siege of a fortified Town ; which every one knows is to be effected by Conduct and Perseverance, rather than by personal Courage and Bravery. We are attacking a Fortress that has held it out many Ages against all sorts of Enemies. The Garri-
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son is well provided with Stores, Ammunition, and Provisions of all sorts, and can hardly be taken or lost but by the Cowardice and Treachery of its Governors and Commanders. We are not therefore to depend upon the Number, Zeal or Courage of an undisciplin'd Rabble, without Government and Direction; we are not to run our Heads against Stone-walls without Fear or Wit. There must be some Person of a cool Head and a warm Heart to command the Siege, to appoint the Subalterns to their different Posts, according to their different Talents, and the different Circumstances of the Service. The Trenches must be opened, and the Approaches made in due Form, under the Protection of proper Works, and the Direction of skilful Engineers. Every Man is not fit to command a Siege, or a Party, who yet may manage a Spade or a Pick-ax, carry a Fascine, throw a Grenado or Stink-pot, or spring a Mine, whilst those who are to cover the Siege are to be vigilant and active to intercept Convoys, to prevent the Surprize of any unguarded Post, or the throwing fresh Succours into the Town, and give such Relief from time to time as the different Circumstances of the Service may require; but if, instead of this regular Disposition, *a Battalion of Petits-Maitres*, elegantly dressed in their Birth-day Suits, attended with Fiddles and *French Horns*, supported by a Brigade of Dancing-masters, or a flying Squadron of Fox-hunters, should take it in their Heads to make a general Assault, nothing less could

could be expected, than the cutting off the Flower of the Army, and the loss of a whole Campaign.

This, I often think, is the nearest Resemblance of our Case that can be imagined. Very great Numbers of smart Fellows, and very pretty Gentlemen, are warmly engaged in the Cause of Liberty and Free-thinking, in opposition to Priestcraft and Superstition ; but, as they have the Misfortune to be under no Direction or Restraint of cooler and wiser Heads than their own, their Zeal outruns their Judgment ; they mistake their Talents, and put themselves upon uncommanded and improper Services, to the manifest Prejudice and Disgrace of their Cause, and, like unsuccessful Rebels, give double Spirit and Credit to the Cause they have been opposing. To speak a plain Truth, which I am sure you must have observed as well as my self, since the Cause of Free-thinking has become reputable and fashionable, under the Patronage and Assistance of Men of Wit and Genius, every idle-headed Jackanapes, who has not Talents enough to shine in any other Sphere of Life, takes it in his Head to turn Free-thinker, and thinks himself qualified for the highest Posts, and most difficult Services of the Party. Hence it comes to pass, that we meet with these Gentlemen Volunteers in almost all Shapes, Forms, Ranks and Stations of Life. If my Lord, or the 'Squire have Understanding enough to see through and oppose popular Prejudices and pious Frauds im-

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posed upon the simple and credulous, under the venerable Name and Mask of Religion, the same Zeal, without the same Knowledge, naturally spreads itself through the whole Family. The Valet quickly shines with the cast Wit and Philosophy, as well as the Clothes of his Master, to the Disgrace and Contempt of them both : For those profound Sentiments and judicious Reflections, which would have been heard with Attention and Applause from his Lordship or his Worship, are so debased by passing through vulgar Mouths, Forms of Speech, and Manner of Expression, that they appear contemptible to Men of Sense, and are exposed to the Raillery of every cunning Disputant, well knowing that the Retailer and Vender of those noble Discoveries, has not one Word to say in defence of them. Your old Friend, the little Captain, by the constant overflowings of his Wisdom and Zeal, has made his whole Family and Neighbourhood almost as wise and eloquent as himself. His very Footmen can joke upon Religion, can banter the Bible and Parson with as good an Air, and almost as much Wit as their Master. I was t'other Day diverted and provoked at the same time, with the grave Impertinence of his Gardener, who came with a very significant Face to borrow of me *Woollaston's Religion of Nature*. Why, Tom, said I, thou art scarce able to read it, much less to understand it. *Never fear, Sir,* said he, *if it be against Religion and Parsons, as I am told it is, I warrant you, with a little*
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of my Master's help, I shall be able to make it out. I dare say you remember his old Pot-Companion *Harry Muddle*, who had for some Years earned his Drink by being obliged to laugh very heartily whenever *his Honour* attempted to be witty upon *Religion and Parsons*, in which, by the help of good Lungs and a round Countenance, he acquitted himself to Admiration. This dull Rogue has at last took it into his Head to assume a Character of his own, and set up for himself. He ventures now and then to retail some of his Master's *wise Sentences*, and put them off as his own. He was t'other Night very witty, in his Way, upon Creeds and Creed-makers; and concluded with saying, That it should ever be a Rule with him, *not to believe any thing but what he could understand.* Upon which *Will Dry*, who sat smoaking beside him, very gravely lays down his Pipe, and looking archly upon him, *Why then Friend Harry*, says he, *I will venture to affirm, thou wilt have the shortest Creed of any Man in Britain.* Now, I insist upon it, such Fellows as these disgrace our Cause, and by their absurd Pretensions to Reason and Free-thinking, render both themselves and their Patrons contemptible.—Mistake me not, I would not be thought to discommend or discourage their Zeal for the good Cause; no, by no means; they are all heartily welcome; the more the merryer; *defendet numerus.* But still, methinks, I would have them all under proper Regulations, that every Man should know his Rank

and Post, and be employed in such Offices, and such only, as are suited to his Genius and Capacity. This would prevent unspeakable Confusion, and by steady Patience and Perseverance, could not fail, in time, of producing such Effects as you and I could wish, which can never be produced by the present undisciplin'd giddy Measures of our Free-thinking Brethren.

This absurd Conduct has done us unspeakable Mischief, and so prejudic'd men of cool and considerate Tempers, that they are ashamed of a Cause so weakly conducted, and so ridiculously supported : insomuch, that even among the Gentlemen of the Army, where our great Strength was once supposed to lie, I know several, who are universally acknowledged to be Men of Genius, Worth and Honour, who were never known to want either Courage or Presence of Mind in an Article of Danger, yet are now become so — so, what shall I call it! so superstitious as to be afraid of doing or saying what the Believers call a prophane or irreligious Thing ; they even make a Scruple of breaking one of the Ten Commandments ; they are not ashamed to go to Church, to read the Bible, to say their Prayers, to give Alms, and even to converse with a Parson without affronting his Character ; nay, some of them carry the matter so far, as to appear zealous for the Interest and Honour of Religion ; nay, much more so than many who are obliged by their Interest, as well as their Duty and Profession,

fion, to adorn and defend it. This is a mortifying Consideration. — If things go on at this Rate, we know not how they will end, for these Gentlemen can fight as well as talk for Religion; and if they should once take it in their Heads that Religion was a Cause worth fighting for, it might go a great way towards hindering free Debate upon Religious Subjects, and do irreparable Mischief to our Cause; of which I my self have seen two or three very fatal Instances. I was once at a Coffee-house, where a very spritely young Fellow was entertaining the Company with a great many unlucky Jokes and Flings upon Religion in general. An Officer who sat near him, at length interrupted him: *Sir, said he, that God, whose Name you have dishonoured, whose Worship you despise, whose Religion you treat with Irreverence and Contempt, is my Creator, my Father, and my best Friend; and though I cannot dispute for him, yet I can fight for him, and in his Name I demand Satisfaction.* This unexpected Rebuff made so violent an Impression upon the Spirits of the young Orator, that it immediately threw him into a ColliquativeDiarrhoea, which carried him off in less than four and twenty Hours, and has ever since given me an incurable Averfion to these bloody-minded Crusado Christians, who are for running a Man through the Body, in order to save his Soul.

What then must be done! Why the Malady points out the Remedy, the Disease directs us to the Cure: there is no other way of recovering

vering our Reputation but by acting a more discreet Part for the future, and laying this undisciplined Rabble under proper Restraints and Regulations. Among the many Projects that have been started in the course of my Lucubrations upon this Subject, I had once a Thought of trying our Interest with the Legislature, to procure a Charter of Incorporation for all Free-thinkers in general; the Governor or Governors of which should be invested with full Powers and Privileges to examine, admit, and restrain, by wholesome Laws of Discipline and Order, all such as should at any time offer themselves as Candidates to be Gremial or Honourary Members of our Society: but the late ill Success of our *Brethren the Quakers and other Protestant Dissenters*, who have been Petitioners upon much the same Pretensions, has convinced me, that there is too great a Majority of Believers in both Houses to expect any Good at present from that Quarter. However, we may under the Protection of the Toleration-Act form ourselves into a voluntary Society for promoting the same Cause, obtaining the same Ends, and answering all the real Purposes of a legal Incorporation: A short Scheme of which I shall endeavour to lay before you, which I shall submit to be examined and amended by such of our Friends as you shall think best qualify'd to advise in so important an Affair. — My accidental mention of the Quakers suggests to me a lucky Hint, which your good Sense cannot fail

fail to improve. Every body knows that they are the most politick thriving Body of Men that ever subsisted in this or any other Nation without ——— without, did I say! ——— Nay, in direct Defiance to a legal and national Establishment; and therefore as there is a very great Resemblance betwixt our Principles and theirs, particularly in the great Articles of *Priesthood, Consecrated Places, Ecclesiastical Order, Sacraments, Articles of Faith, and Payment of Tythes*; so I cannot but think it would be good Policy to copy after their Plan of Association, and build upon their Model, I mean only as to the political Interests of the Society.

The Quakers, (if I am not misinformed) besides their weekly Meetings, have their quarterly Meetings of Deputies from their several Congregations, within such particular Districts, and a general Meeting of Deputies from the whole Body, who assemble regularly at *London*, every Feast of *Pentecost*, (as they call it) by which the Intercourse and Communication betwixt the several Members and Congregations of the whole Society is maintained. This Scheme with some proper Alterations suited to our different Circumstances I cannot but think would be extremely convenient for us. — Suppose therefore, that there were in every County of *Great Britain*, several Societies, Meetings, or Lodges in proportion to the Extent of the County, and numbers of Brethren, who should meet on any Day of the Week (*Sunday* only

only excepted) and at any Hour of the Day, or rather of the Night, if the Majority shall think it more convenient: That in each of these Societies, or Lodges, there should be appointed an annual Officer to admit and register the Names, Age, Places of Residence, Professions, &c. of all Candidates that shall appear worthy to be admitted; and that out of each of these, two Deputies should be sent to a quarterly Meeting at the County Town, the *Monday* following the respective Quarter Sessions holden at each Town,; where all Matters and Causes relating to the particular Interest of each separate Lodge, or Society, and the general Interest of the whole might be examined and settled. And that a General Meeting of two Deputies from each Congregation should assemble every Year on *the first Day of April*, at a proper Place to be hereafter settled and agreed upon by a Majority of Votes. *London* I can by no means think a proper Place, though Custom has made it the very Centre of Business and Correspondence; yet forasmuch as we are in a particular Way of Thinking, and owe no Reverence to the Fashions and Opinions of others, but only consult our own Ease and Convenience, it appears more agreeable to us to pitch upon some Place near the Centre of the Kingdom, for the greater Ease of the Deputies who are to assemble there. And here my good Genius directs me to make use of this Opportunity, to pay my unfeigned Reverence and Respect to a once renowned, though long neglected Seminary

Seminary of Wit and Learning, famous in the Annals of former Ages, whose wise Inhabitants were no less celebrated in the Songs and Proverbs of antient Times, than the venerable Sages of antient *Greece* and *Rome*. You will easily imagine I can mean no other than the famous Town of *Goatham* in *Nottinghamshire*, whose Ruins I have long bewailed with a more than filial Piety, and hope to see it once more restored by the united Zeal and Labour of our Friends to its pristine Fame and Splendor, so as to equal, at least, if not eclipse all our establish'd Seminaries of blind Zeal, Bigotry, and Superstition. Here I hope to see begun, at least, if not compleated, a noble and ample foundation, richly endowed by some of our opulent Friends, to be a Nursery for future Champions of Liberty and Free-thinking, till it become the Establishment of these Kingdoms. Nor can this be thought an improbable or unreasonable Prospect, by any that considers the unwearied Zeal, and unbounded Benevolence that distinguish our Leaders from the Friends of Slavery and Superstition, whose Heads and Hearts are cramped by narrow Notions of Orthodoxy, Discipline and Order. But till this can be accomplish'd, it were a desirable Thing, that *private Seminaries or Academies* were erected in convenient Places, for the Reception and Education of proper Persons, to be sent out from time to time upon the Mission, with proper Instructions how to act agreeably to their several Talents and Capacities, as the

different Exigencies of the Publick may require.

I would therefore humbly propose, that no Person of what Age, Rank, or Quality soever should be permitted to act or talk in Publick as a Free thinker, who had not been regularly matriculated in one of these Academies or Societies, and a due Examination had, and taken by the proper Officers, of the Talents and Abilities of the several Pupils and Students, that every one should have his proper Post assigned him, and not presume to exceed the Commission given him by his respective Superiors and Directors. And here to avoid Confusion, I should propose that the whole Body should be divided into three general Ranks, Classes, or Degrees, which was the antient Establishment, even in the earliest Time, as I could clearly make appear from the History of all Ages, though by the Negligence or Presumption of late Pretenders, this necessary Subordination has been greatly neglected, to the apparent Prejudice of our Society. Of this you have a faint Resemblance in the academical Degrees, which may help to give us an Idea of the general Plan.

In our Academy.

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| I. | } answering to |
| 1. Risors, | |
| 2. Derisors, | |
| 3. Irrisors, | |
| II. | |
| Querists, | |
| III. | |
| Paralogicians, | |

In the University.

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| I. |
| 1. Undergraduate Students. |
| 2. Junior Sophs. |
| 3. Senior Sophs. |
| II. |
| Inceptors, or Batchelors. |
| III. |
| Masters, Doctors, or Professors. |

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The *Risors* are a very antient, numerous, and useful Body of Men, mention'd under different Names in the Histories and Languages of all Nations. *Horace* mentions them under this very Name of *Risors*. *Risores inter Satyrosque dicaces & Ridentes. Ridentem dicere verum Quid vetat?* As their Business is nothing but to smile, laugh, or grin upon proper Occasions, very few and slender Talents are required of them; a soft Forehead, and a flexible Set of Muscles are sufficient Qualifications for one of those Gentlemen to begin with. These being assisted and improved by a regular and *natural Education*, through *the Nursery, the Still-room, the Dancing-school, the Dog-kennel, and the Stable*, (I mean only a Country Education, where no better Improvements of that kind can be had) will make an able and useful *Risor*. I call this a *natural Education*, because it is following and improving the original Biass and Inclinations of unprejudiced Nature, in which the great Secret of a proper Education is known to consist. Injudicious Parents are too apt to call in the Assistance of Book-learn'd Pedants, under the Notion of Tutors, Masters and Governors, who are for putting their young Pupils into such Methods as are apt to injure their Eyes and their Health, puzzle their Heads, check their Appetites, cramp their Genius, and prejudice their Understandings, by Lectures of Pedantry, Enthusiasm and Superstition; whereas if they were left to themselves, their Inclinations to run in their proper Channel, as di-

rected by the Infallible Light of Nature, they would (generally speaking) fall naturally into this Train of Life and Action. *Horace*, who is universally allowed to be a good Judge of Nature, is intirely of this Opinion, and tells you, that this is the Tendency and Course of Nature unrestrained by Discipline, and unprejudiced by Education. *Imberbis juvenis, tandem custode remoto.* (Ay, ay, observe those Words, *Custode remoto*, there lies the Pinch of the whole Affair; if it were not for those impertinent Pedants, Nature would have fair play,) *Gaudet equis canibusque & aprici gramine campi*: would delight in Horses and Dogs, and the Diversions of the Country, in the most extensive Sense and Meaning of the Word. It would not indeed be amiss, if, without injuring their Health and prejudicing their Minds, they could be taught to read, and write, and spell tolerably, it might be of use to themselves, and give some credit to their Order; but it is so far from being absolutely necessary, that I know several who make a good Figure among them, and yet can do neither. The being able to laugh properly, by the Direction of their Superiors, depends upon no great Acquirements or Improvements of Understanding; for it is beyond all question, that the first Founders of Mankind could laugh before they could write or read. Risibility or the Faculty of Laughing is so essential to a Reasonable Creature, that it enters into the Definition of a Man, and is convertible with it, it is the first visible Symptom of

of Sense and Reason in Infants, and is the proper *Medium* by which Philosophers have thought fit to prove it in their ordinary Systems of Logick : *Omne risibile est rationale* is as certain and well-known a Maxim, as that *two and two make four*. To this I suppose you will object upon the Authority of our Friend *Horace*, that something more should be expected from a *simple Risor* than mere Laughing, because he has joined *Risores Satyrosque dicaces* together; and in another Passage, he supposes that the *Ridens* (or *Risor*, which is all one) may be able to speak truth, and consequently talk sense when he asks the Question; *Ridentem dicere verum quid vetat?* As to the first Objection, it is obvious at first Sight, that the Epithet *dicaces* is intirely appropriate to *Satyros*, and has nothing to do with *Risores*; and this is the concurring Judgment of the best Criticks and Commentators: As for the latter it answers it self. When the Poet asks the Question, what hinders a *Risor* from speaking truth, or talking sense? the very Terms of the Question imply a strong Negation, *i. e.* nothing hinders him. And therefore if he does neither, it is intirely his own Fault, no body will hinder him from doing it if he can; and therefore if he does not, it is purely owing to his want of Inclination or Ability, or both.

The Gentlemen of this Class should be forbid, under severe Penalties, to attempt any thing beyond their proper Sphere, or indeed within it, unless in aid of their proper Superiors,
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who are to be considered as their commanding Officers: As for the instance, if a *Querist*, or *Paralogician*, should take it in his Head to act offensive to, and begin an Attack upon any Person, or Cause; which for want of Skill or Ability he should not be able to maintain, then in such a Case the *Risors*, some of whom are always to attend and support such Superiors, should, upon a proper Signal, burst out all at once into a loud Laugh, which seldom fails to confound and disconcert the most cunning Adversary, and like springing a Mine supplies by Stratagem the want of proper Strength and good Conduct: For the *Risors* are to be considered as the private Men of the *Corps*, who are to obey the Word of Command, and attempt nothing without it; or like *Cyphers*, which tho' nothing at all in themselves, yet by a proper Assortment with People of Figure, are known to make out very well, and turn to a good Account.

If any Gentleman of this Class, should by striking out into the World and keeping the best Company, be so happy as to arrive at such a Competency of Front and Humour, as to be able to enliven Conversation with a Dash of Pleasantry and Banter, should be witty enough to ward off a serious Argument or a pinching Question with a Joke or a Pun, he shall upon proper Testimonials of his Proficiency, be admitted into a higher Class, called the *DERISORS*, Jokers, Banterers, or merry Fellows, answering to the Degree of Junior Sophs
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in the University. These are allowed not only to laugh at Religion, but to be witty to the best of their Abilities, upon Parsons, Priestcraft, Creeds and Creed-makers, &c. or any other Topic that may divert and encourage our Friends; or expose and confound our Enemies, and this to be always accompanied with proper Motions and Expressions of Raillery and Humour, such as a contemptuous Cock of the Nose, Leer of the Eye, Contraction of the Nether-lip, and Elevation of the Chin, such as we frequently observe among the young Orators in the Coffee-houses near the Inns of Court, and the polite End of the Town.

If, after due Trial in this Class, it appears that any of them are capable of further Improvement, and discover a good Degree of Fire and Spirit upon proper or improper Occasions, they shall then be admitted into the highest Rank or Degree of *Risors*, called the **IRRI-SORS**, answering to the Degree of *Senior Sophs*; and shall be allowed not only to laugh and be witty, but to insult upon proper Occasions; especially, when they have to do with modest peaceable People, who are in no danger of returning the Compliment in their own Way. They may then safely and reasonably bully and hector, lay Wagers, call Fool, or Puppy, or Son of a Wh-re, give the Lye, or (if need be, and they are sure it can be done with Safety) a Challenge. Pray observe my reasonable and prudent Precaution, that it may be done with Safety; for that Man would be
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inexcusably rash and fool-hardy, who should put himself in danger of turning out of this World, in defence of an Argument to prove there is no other beyond it; for if he should too late find himself mistaken, (and none of us can pretend to Demonstration on our Side of the Question,) it would be a damn'd unlucky Experiment, without a Possibility of Recovery. I insist upon it therefore, that no *Irrisor* should pretend to use the Language of Defiance, till he is very sure of his Man, lest he should catch a Tartar, which more than once or twice I have known to be the Case, to the great Discredit of our Cause, and Dishonour of our Champions. The Poet has given us an admirable Description of one of this Class in the Character of *Perithous* in his Dispute with *Achelous*.
^a He describes him as a Man of a ^b fierce Temper, that neither ^c feared the Gods nor regarded Men, and therefore gives his Antagonist the Lye ^d, and calls him a ^e credulous superstitious Puppy, to give any Credit to such ridiculous Absurdities as had been related in the Story of a miraculous Transformation. It was well for him that *Lelex* *, the principal Person of the Company, was a Man of more Age and Gravity than himself; had he been a furious hot-mettled

^a IRRIDET credentes, utque ^c Deorum
 Spectator erat, ^b mentisque ferox Ixione natus

^d FICTA REFERS ^e nimiumq; putas Achelœe potentes
 Esse Deos, inquit, si dant adiuvuntque figuras. *Ovid. Met.*

* Ante omnesque Lelex animo maturus & ævo.

mettled Fellow, more Mischief might have been done in half an Hour, than might have been repaired in half an Age.

Some of the Gentlemen of this Class may probably have Ambition enough to shine in a higher Degree or Sphere of Life; if so, they must be assured, that higher Attainments will be expected from them, and therefore I would advise those who cannot read, to put themselves under some diligent and industrious Tutor, that they may without Delay make themselves able to read at least such Books as shall be recommended to them by their Superiors. And as for those who can read already, I humbly propose that they should begin with reading the History of *Tom Thumb*, *Robin Hood*, *Curl's* modest Collection of Poems, *Tryals*, &c. *Independent Whig*, *Fable of the Bees*, *Sh—ry's Characteristicks*, *Barbeyrac*, but above all *Bayle's Dictionary*; which Book alone, is a Treasure of Learning to them who are able to read it, and indeed to those that are not, if they are so happy as to live in such a Neighbourhood, as to hear it read sometimes, or some of its shining Parts repeated in Conversation. I have known Wonders done solely by this Book. I knew a certain Gentleman, of a very robust Constitution, and a good bodily Understanding, who never seemed to have either Talents or Ambition for any thing higher than a *simple Risor* in Matters of Religion, tho' a good Fox-hunter, and a very good Bowler. This Man had the good Fortune to

be confined above two Months by a Fit of the Gout, in which he read some of the easiest Parts of this stupendous Book, only by way of Amusement in the Interval of his Pains; but, to the Surprize of all that knew him, it had so marvellous an Effect upon his Understanding, he immediately commenced an accomplish'd *Querist*. I have heard him flourish with the Wit and Criticism of that renowned Author, for above an Hour together, without the least Sign of Fear or Diffidence, and would make no more of the Parson of the Parish than he would of a Tom-tit, or a Butterfly. If this ingenious Gentleman should have the good Fortune to have such another Fit, I would venture to foretell, that he would be as accomplish'd a *Paralogician* as any Man of his Talents can be supposed to be.

And as the Students in other Academies are distinguish'd by certain Habits, Badges, or Marks of Distinction, expressive of their Quality, Rank and Station, so I would humbly propose, that the three above mentioned Classes should be distinguish'd from the rest by wearing a Cockade of red and yellow Ribbands, curiously and artfully plaited together, but of different Sizes, in Proportion to their different Standing and Degrees; and if it should happen that any of the Military Gentlemen should be admitted among them, who are already distinguish'd by a smart Cockade of black Ribband, in all such Cases, that due Honour may be paid to their distinct Capacities, they shall be allowed

allowed to mix them, (or to speak in the Language of Heraldry) to quarter the different Atchievements of the two united Families.

The Antiquity of this threefold Distinction of the RISORS is very great. King *David*, if he were the Author of the first Psalm, plainly points at them, tho' he spitefully and maliciously marks them out by Nick-names, and opprobrious Characters. But I find by the *Latin* (which you know with a little Embroidery of *French*, is generally the Top of our Attainments) that the very Names of DERISORS and IRRISORS, are directly mention'd in the very Sense that we mean them, tho' not, perhaps, in the same Degrees of Subordination that we have assigned them. The *Latin* Version of the *Hebrew* calls them *Derisores*, in concessu *Derisorum non sedit*. The *Syriack* (I mean the *Latin* Version) calls them *Irrisores*, super sede *Irrisorum non sedit*. And it appears by the Writings of the Believers themselves, that there has been a very ancient Tradition, which some pretend to carry higher than *Noah's Flood*, that in the latter Times, (not improbably our own Times, these Days of Light and Philosophy) the Gentlemen of this Class should make a shining Figure in the World, and greatly distress the Patrons and Defenders of Priestcraft and Superstition. The Author of the Book commonly called *Peter's second Epistle*, mentions it in the third Chapter in a very particular and emphatical Manner, *Knowing this first, that in the last days*
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shall arise *IRRISORES*, says *Beza's Latin* Version, *ILLUSORES*, says the *Vulgar Latin*; which our *English* Version has spitefully and maliciously translated *Scoffers*, a Word of a ridiculous and opprobrious Sound, tho' the Original certainly meant nothing more than this Rank or Class of Philosophers which we have been describing, because he immediately mentions the same Persons under the Character of *Querists*, which is the next Degree to that of the *Irrisors*.

The Students, who have acquitted themselves well in these lower Classes, and after due Examination (which shall be constantly had at every Anniversary Meeting) shall appear qualified for higher Degrees and Services, shall then be admitted to the Degree of *Querists*, answering to that of *Inceptors* or *Batchelors* in the University. They shall not only be allowed to laugh and banter, but to puzzle and perplex Conversation, to interrupt every thing that looks like close Reasoning in the Way of common Logic, to which the Gentlemen of this Class are not permitted to make a direct Reply, but to beat them out of their Play, by pouring in smart and unlucky Questions one upon the Neck of another, with a very arch Face, without staying for an Answer. This, let me tell you, is a very useful Exercise, which I have seen play'd off more than once with very good Effect. We were some of us not long ago at Lord *W*—'s Table, where my little Captain is allowed the Liberty of talking his own Way,

without Check or Restraint; upon his opening a little too deep, he was interrupted by a sinoaky old Parson, who sat beside him in a Lay Habit: As soon as he could recover himself from his Confusion, he cock'd up his short Chin in a Posture of Defiance, look'd fierce as a Cock-Sparrow, and begins as follows. *Doctor, I knew not you were a Parson, but as I find you are, and make no doubt but you are a Man of Learning, I want to be satisfied in some Doubts which I hope you will be able to resolve me. Pray tell me what you think of the Story of Adam and Eve, was it not a damn'd hard Case that they should be so severely punish'd only for eating an Apple? — And is it not still a greater Hardship upon us poor Devils their Posterity, to be punish'd for their Faults, in which we had no manner of Concern? Is not this very hard Doctor? —* As the Doctor was beginning to reply, he proceeds, *Don't you think, Doctor, that Adam was in a fine Situation, in a delightful Garden with the finest Woman in the World — — What would you have given to have been in his Case? Hey Doctor!* As the Doctor was about to speak, he proceeds, *And then as to the Story of the Serpent —* Upon this four or five Risors, who sat near him ready charged, upon a proper Signal burst out altogether into a loud Laughter; upon which the Doctor softly stole his Beaver off the Pin, and brush'd off, leaving us in Possession of the Field, and all the Marks of Victory, of which securing the Laugh on our Side is not the least.

I speak my own Experience ; I know not a more useful Exercise than that of a *Querist*, if artfully and boldly executed, especially in Conversation, it being an undoubted Maxim, *That one Fool may ask more Questions than ten Wise Men can answer.* — The Gentlemen of this Degree are permitted and advised to read the inimitable Writings of Mr. *Hobbes*, *Blunt*, *Toland*, *Tindal*, *Collins*, *Gordon*, and that Prince of Paralogicians, the *Moral Philosopher* ; without troubling themselves with the numberless Answers that have been given them, which would end in nothing but losing time and puzzling the Cause. As for the antient Patrons and Defenders of our Society, such as *Porphry*, *Celsus*, *Julian*, &c. let them sleep in peace. As they wrote in a Language little known and less understood by the polite Moderns, it would be the Work of an Age to make any considerable Advantage by their Writings, against a Party, who are apparently too vain of their Skill in antient Languages, to overlook any Slips or Mistakes of our Friends, without a severe and indecent Correction : witness the Behaviour of that four old Critick, *Philelutherus Lipsiensis*, who exposed a few innocent Mistakes of one of our best Writers, with as much Insolence and Pedantry as if he had been disciplining a School-Boy, for which we shall never forget nor forgive him. The Badge of this Order shall be a Tippet of red Silk, with a yellow Border fix'd upon their left Shoulder.

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If any Gentleman of this Class or Degree shall have given sufficient Proofs of his Zeal and Abilities to promote the Service of the Society in a higher Order, he shall be admitted to the Degree of *Paralogicians*, which is the highest Honour we can possibly bestow upon our most deserving Members. They are to be the Philosophers and Disputers of our Body, but in quite a new Method, being furnished with a Set of principal Axioms, Modes, and Figures, the very reverse of the vulgar and popular Logick. To speak a plain and undeniable Truth, the Enemies of our Cause, the Friends of Priestcraft and Superstition, as they have been long in possession of their Claim to Truth and Orthodoxy, and have found the Sweetness of Power and Dominion over the Understandings and Consciences of Mankind, so they have taken care to be well paid into the bargain, by getting all the Affairs and Interests of the Publick centre at last in what they call Religion; this has necessarily produced a great Variety of Offices, Posts, and Employments, with large Endowments, fine Salaries, and unknown Perquisites, which they have cunningly divided among their own Party; whom they affirm to be the only Persons duly qualified to execute the several Offices, and enjoy the Endowments. As for the due Execution of the Office, we have little to say; but if it can be made appear to the Publick, that these Offices are not only a useless Invention, but are dangerous and burdensome to the Common-wealth, they ought certainly,

tainly, in Equity and good Policy, to be entirely suppress'd, and the Revenues and Salaries annexed to them, should be bestowed on those who have had the Sagacity to detect the Cheat, and the Courage to oppose and suppress it. And as they were always apprehensive of the certain Consequences of a free and rational Examination of their Scheme, so they have endeavoured to support and maintain it, by all the mean ungenerous Arts that *Policy, Interest, Power, the Favour of the Magistrate, and a bad Cause* could suggest; they have fetter'd and confined our Understandings by absurd Impositions of *Creeds, Systems, Canons, Articles and Confessions of Faith*, double guarded by legal Penalties and civil Incapacities; and as if all this was not sufficient, (for the Patrons of a bad Cause never think themselves secure) they have employed from time to time the best Heads of the Party to compose a System of Principles, Rules and Method of Argumentation, all of their own Side of the Question, and have cunningly agreed to make it a necessary Preparative for all their Disciples, in order to come at the Knowledge of Truth, by which means the young People are early prepossessed with the Prejudices of the Party, and an invincible By-ass towards the fashionable, plausible, and gainful Side. And this I take to be as unreasonable an Imposition upon our Understandings as *Creeds* themselves, because it cramps and fetters us in the Exercise of our Faculties, tho' it does not forbid us the Use of them. Every
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body has *Reason*, but every body does not understand *Logic*. The natural unprejudiced *Reason* of Mankind is the same well-meaning honest Faculties in all Sorts of People; it sees, and judges, and talks of all manner of Things and Matters by its own plain and infallible Light, and has no more occasion for Rules, Moods and Figures, to shew when it is in the Right and when in the Wrong, than to tell me when I am hungry or thirsty, or full, at Ease or in Pain, in Sickneſs or in Health; be ſure it was ſo among the Primitive Inhabitants of the World, long before theſe plaguy *Systems*, with their *Definitions*, *Axioms*, *Moods*, *Figures*, *Syllogiſms*, and the reſt of their *Tranſguons* were invented. I have been often provoked beyond meaſure, to hear a polite Converſation interrupted by one of theſe *reasoning Puppies*, in a Manner that even deſerved the Diſcipline of the Blanket.—I waſt'other day in a very elegant Converſation, where one of our Society, a young Fellow of lively Parts, and flowing Eloquence, had been entertaining us upon the Subject of religious Frauds, with a Profuſion of Wit and good Senſe, but having in the Warmth of his Imagination drop'd an unguarded Aſſertion, up ſtarts one of thoſe ſolemn Coxcombs, who (with the Appearance of a Man of Senſe and good Manners) had lain for ſome time upon the Catch, and deſires him to explain himſelf, to defend his Aſſertion, and produce his Reaſons. The young Orator was a little confounded at this pedantic ungentle-

man-like Behaviour; and indeed the whole Company thought themselves bound in honour to resent such an outrageous Breach of good Manners; and for my own Part, I told him in the Language of the renowned Sir *John Falstaff*, *That if I were in that Gentleman's Case, and Reasons were as plenty as Black-berries, I would give no Man a Reason upon Compulsion.* Reasons, to be sure, we have in great plenty, and such as we think very good ones; but then we are the only proper Judges on what Occasions, and in what Company, to produce them; for so malicious and partial are our Adversaries, that they insist upon having our Reasons and Arguments weighed and measured by their Standard, in which they are sure to have the Advantage; and because we do not proceed and conclude, by the Way of Premises and Conclusions drawn out in Mood and Figure, which they have maliciously contrived to be always on their Side of the Question, they wantonly insult us, and tell us, that our Reasons are sophisticated, our Arguments are all damaged Goods, and not worth Twopence a Thousand. This is an amazing Piece of Hardship to us, and Partiality in them; they have engrossed all the Arms and Ammunition in the Country, and then insult us for not being as well provided as they; they challenge us to fight without allowing us Weapons, and when we are forced to make use of such as we can procure; they tell us we make Use of unlawful and unstatutable Weapons, and therefore have

have no Title to that Candour and Indulgence, which, by all the Laws of Chivalry, are due to fair and honourable Combatants. — All therefore, that is left for us to do in this Exigency, is to employ some of the ablest and coolest Heads among us, to compile a new System of Logic, in which all the *extraordinary* Methods of Proof proper for *extraordinary* Cases, which they have agreed to explode and condemn as fallacious, may be allowed and confirmed as just and good by a proper Authority, that we may be at least upon the same Foot with the rest of his Majesty's loving Subjects. — And then, my noble Heart, we bid them Defiance. — But in the hurry of my Imagination, I had like to have forgot the proper Habits or Badges to be worn by the Gentlemen of this Order. A Paralogician shall wear a short Mantle of red Silk, with a Border and Fringe of yellow, and a Cap of the same Colours empannelled, of a Pyramidical Form, like our Grenadiers Caps, from the Top of which bending backwards, shall hang behind, upon a Twist or Braid of red and yellow Silk, a small Silver Bell, and on the Front shall be curiously embroidered an ingenious Hieroglyphic, commonly called in the Towns of *Holland* the Sign of the **Misfoorftondt**, (*the Misunderstanding*) which is two Dray-men turned Back to Back, with a Barrel hanging between them.

And, methinks, when I calmly consider the great and useful Ends we propose, and the

natural and rational Methods we pursue to obtain them, it is no unreasonable Presumption to hope for the Protection and Encouragement of our Superiors, in prosecution of a Cause in which we are all equally concerned. — The End we propose is the most useful and benevolent that can be imagined, being nothing less than promoting and securing the Peace and Happiness of Mankind, by delivering them from the gloomy Fancies of a frightened Imagination, and all the ridiculous Terrors of Priestcraft and Superstition; if this can be effected, no matter by what means. If an effectual Cure can be provided, no Man ought to envy us the Glory, nor Mankind the Benefit of such useful and glorious Discoveries. Now this can only be done by shewing, that all the Pretensions to Religion, grounded on a Revelation from Heaven, are nothing but a direct Cheat and Imposition upon Mankind. There is something so incomprehensible, so terrible in the Notion of a SUPREME BEING, who made and governs the World, who observes all our Actions, who has given us a Set of Doctrines, Precepts and Rules of Obedience, by which he will judge and reward, or punish us hereafter, that it must strike a Damp upon the Minds of reasonable Creatures, must embitter all their Pleasures, and abate their Attention to the civil Interests and Affairs of Mankind, in which we are necessarily engaged, and make them scrupulous and diffident in the Exercise of those Arts by which they are most usually and suc-

successfully managed. We therefore hope and
 conclude there is no such BEING, and by
 Consequence no REVELATION. They
 object to this, That the visible World and
 Frame of Nature, are a manifest and sufficient
 Proof of an omnipotent and all-wise Creator.
 To which we reply, That this is no Proof at
 all. The World, for ought we know, might
 make itself, or it might exist from Eternity,
 or it might be made by Chance, each of which
 Opinions have been maintained by many inge-
 nious Writers, both ancient and modern. Be-
 sides, the Notion of Creation implies the ma-
 king *something out of nothing*, which is a direct
 Contradiction to a self-evident Principle, *ex
 nihilo nihil fit*. The Notion of a Providence
 is a Contradiction to our daily Experience; for
 we see *all things happen alike to all men*. The
 Good (as they are called) are neither constantly
 rewarded, nor the Wicked constantly punished;
 so far from it, that the Sun shines, and the
 Rain falls on both alike; Wars and Bloodshed,
 Fires and Earthquakes, Storms and Tempests,
 make no Distinction betwixt those who wor-
 ship God and those who worship him not.
 Nay, more than this, the apparent Advantage
 is on our Side of the Question. Pray, tell me,
 what is there to be got in this World purely by
 being good? but Infamy, Reproach, Con-
 tempt and Poverty? Shew me the Man that e-
 ver was preferred (I mean, in the ordinary and
 natural Course of Things) purely on account
 of being a religious Man, and I will undertake

to shew you ten, who owe their Promotion entirely to their having no Religion at all? Then as to the Story of Miracles and Prophecies, upon which they lay so great a Stress, as to build their Systems of Religion upon them, as both Jews and Christians are known to do, they are so far from being certain, that the whole have been suspected by some very sagacious Enquirers, to be owing to the Cunning of Knaves and the Credulity of Fools. Those who talk of them, and build so much upon them, do not pretend that they have ever seen the one, or have undeniable Evidence for the other; I mean such sort of Evidence as we reckon sufficient in the ordinary Occurrences of Life, so plain as that no body in their Senses can entertain any reasonable Doubt. If they had, every body would see and believe, as assuredly and universally as they do the daily Objects of their Senses, such as the Vicissitudes of Day and Night, the Succession of Seasons, the Generation and Corruption of Bodies. These Things are obvious and plain; every body sees, and believes, and reasons, and concludes, and acts agreeably; but these other supernatural Crotchets, fetch'd from an invifible World, are a Sort of fairy Stories, contrived by Priests, propagated by Grand-mothers and Nurses, and believed by Children and Fools. Nay further, suppose such extraordinary Appearances could be proved by concurrent Histories and Traditions of all Ages, nay, that we ourselves had seen and heard them, yet could they not thence be
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concluded to be supernatural and miraculous, but might only appear so to the ignorant, the injudicious and credulous, who, not knowing the Extent of natural Powers and second Causes, might impute the surprizing Operations, even of mechanical Powers, to some invifible and omnipotent Agent. It is well known, that in the first *European* Expeditions to *America*, the ignorant *Indians* imagined the Ships to be living Creatures, and that the Discharge of their Artillery was either the Voice of those monstrous floating Animals, or something supernatural and miraculous. Every body knows, that *Columbus*, by foretelling an Eclipse, frightened the mutinous Natives into Submission and Slavery; they imagined the heavenly Bodies were at his Command and under his Direction, and that therefore it would be vain and presumptuous in them to oppose a Man who had the Powers of Heaven and Earth at command. And some very cunning People have had a Suspicion that it cost *Moses* a good many Barrels of Gun-powder, to procure fuch a Quantity of Thunder and Lightning, as might be fufficient to frighten that thick-scall'd Generation into a Submission to that insupportable Yoke of Laws and Ordinances that he had been preparing for them; and feveral Attempts have been made to prove the pretended Miracles of the Christian Law-giver, to be nothing more than Slight of Hand or *Leger-de-main*. Poor *Woolston*! he struck a bold Stroke, but the Laws and the Judges were againft him; and

and till we see an Alteration in both, we can expect but little good from our united most vigorous Opposition to Priestcraft and Superstition : But Courage, my Friend, let us hope the best. *Nil desperandum* is our Motto. But to proceed. As this whole System of Religion, whether Jewish or Christian, is apparently and confessedly mysterious and incomprehensible ; we cannot fairly and consistently be supposed to have much Concern or Interest in it : for (pardon a little more *Latin*, and it is all I have left) it is a Maxim among us, and a very reasonable one too, *Quæ supra nos, nihil ad nos*. And therefore, since we are necessarily chained down to this little Spot of Earth, and a very pretty convenient Spot it is, plentifully provided with all the Necessaries and Conveniencies of Life, without which we cannot subsist ; *Nature*, which (we all agree) *does nothing in vain*, points out to us the proper Use we ought to make of it. All agree she has given us warm and invincible Appetites for the support of our Persons, and Propagation of our Species, which is apparently the whole Business, Employment and Happiness of the rest of our Brother Animals, who have nothing else to do but to live, eat, drink, propagate and die, and to imagine that we were intended for any thing above or beyond this, is at most mere Matter of Conjecture and nothing else. This is a short, but imperfect View of our Scheme, which being evidently calculated for the Ease and Benefit of Mankind, may reasonably be defended

defended and supported by such Ways and Means as we shall think proper.

'Tis true the present Sense of the Legislature seems to be against us, so that we have little Reason to expect they will take any extraordinary Measures for the support and Improvement of our Society, or the Defence of those Principles on which it is founded. But we live in an Age of Discoveries and Improvements. We have seen wonderful Events in our Days, such as the wisest of our Fathers never dream'd of. Men of Genius and Penetration, especially in high Places, scorn to jog on in the beaten Track of their dull Fore-fathers, and know that all our Schemes of Politicks and Religion, as well as Arts and Sciences, are capable of Improvements. New Schemes naturally produce new Measures, new Measures always produce new Difficulties, new Difficulties require new Expedients to qualify or remove them; so that in a little time the Affairs of a Nation may have quite a new Face, run in quite a new Channel, and require quite a new Set of Principles to justify the marvellous Alteration: So that the wisest Man upon Earth cannot foretell what half a Century more may or may not produce in our favour; especially when the Publick shall be duly apprised of the Usefulness of our Society, the present Difficulties under which we labour in the Prosecution of our Scheme, and how small a Degree of Publick Indulgence would entirely remove those Difficulties, and put us upon the same equitable

Foot with our Adversaries. How useful the Principles and Members of our Society have been in all Ages, in arduous and desperate Services, Changes, Reformations, and Revolutions in Church and State, is not consistent with our known Modesty to declare; we could not do Justice to our own Characters without blushing, which is to us a very painful Sensation. Let the Annals of past Ages declare, and let the Historians of the present and future Times faithfully record how useful we have been, and may hereafter be, in contriving, executing and defending the deep Designs and wondrous Atchievements of Statesmen, Politicians, and Conquerors. Wise Ministers therefore should shew a particular Regard to the Body of *Paralogicians*, as a Set of Men that may be of singular Use to them in many Articles of Affairs, both Ecclesiastical and Civil; if, for instance, any Scheme should be concerted, or Project executed, which could not be explained or vindicated by any Rules of the vulgar and popular Logic, or what the common Herd of Mankind have agreed to call *Reason*, it would be of infinite Use to the Project and the Projector too, to have a Set of extraordinary Principles, Axioms, Rules and Methods of Reasoning, exactly fitted and adapted to such extraordinary Cases and Occasions. This appears in the Improvements made of late Years in another Branch of Science: I mean *Arithmetick*. Our Forefathers were so egregiously silly, that they knew

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no more than the Vulgar and Decimal; they could tell you with very grave Faces, that 2 and 2 make 4, that 5 and 5 make 10, which every Blockhead knew as well as they; in short, they saw very little in it beyond the low dirty Business of Oeconomy and Trade. The *Arcana Imperii*, the Mysteries of Government, the impenetrable Secrets of the Cabinet, on which the Fates of Empires and Kingdoms depend, which are hid from Vulgar Eyes, into which none but the Sons of Wisdom, the Adepts in the occult Sciences, are or can be admitted; were not to be directed by such low, vulgar, obvious Principles as the popular mercantile Business of Life; they therefore, by incredible Application, Intense-ness and Refinement of Thought, at last invented and brought to Perfection, that most useful Branch of Science which I call *Political Arithmetick*, by which alone such surprizing Wonders have been effected, - as our Fathers would have thought and pronounced to be absolutely impossible. The Use and Correspondence of Numbers in these Operations, is not according to the Vulgar Relation, but depends upon a secret magical Power, under certain planetary Influences and Directions, at certain critical Seasons and momentous Occasions, in which the Power and Value of any Number rises or falls, increases or diminishes, in Proportion to the Difficulties and Advantages of any given Question: So that whereas in Vulgar Arithmetic 5 and 5 make 10, and 10 and

10 make 20; in the Political 5 and 5 shall make 16, and 7 and 7 shall make 34 : And whereas in the Vulgar Computation, 15 is generally esteemed to be more than 10, and less than 20, here 14 are often known to be more than 24, and 30 than 50. But what is still more surprizing to those who are not initiated into these Mysteries, is, that even mere Cyphers, which in Vulgar Arithmetic are nothing, and stand for nothing but as they stand united with some valuable Figure, have here a Weight and Power equal to that of any given Figure. I myself have seen in a most mysterious Operation, one very insignificant Cypher, of greater Force and Power than a long and regular Arrangement of powerful and significant Figures.

Pythagoras and his Disciples are universally known to have been great Dealers in Numbers, and boast much of their Virtues and magical Powers, even in Medicinal Cases, and resolve all or most of the surprizing Cures, which the Ignorance of the Moderns ascribes to Sympathy or occult Qualities, to the sole Virtue of Numbers, into which all Sympathy, Harmony, Concord and Order are ultimately resolved. In natural and bodily Maladies, arising purely from disharmonious disorderly Motions of the Fluids and Animal Spirits, certain Bodies carefully collected from the Vegetable or Mineral World, under some certain and particular Configuration of the heavenly Bodies, and prepared by the Direction of some magical Words and Numbers, would effect a certain, speedy

speedy and almost miraculous Cure: And in spiritual Disorders, even of the most malignant kind, such as, particularly Epilepsy and Madness, which they generally imputed to the Possession of Dæmons, they were all infallibly cured by the Charms of Musick, which is known to be the highest Perfection of Numbers, reduced to perfect Harmony, Proportion and Order. These were great and useful Discoveries, considering the Age in which they were made: But had that great Philosopher lived in these our marvellous Days of Science and Erudition, he would not have made a much better Figure than a common Mountebank; for in both these Cases, there was the Use and Application of external Means to the very Person of the Patient, such as any old Woman that had been used to gather Simples, or any young Fellow that could play a tolerable Fiddle, might be able, with a little Instruction, to apply and explain. But how much more surprising Operations have I seen effected, purely by a lucky Combination of Numbers in Political Arithmetic! I have seen a Person both deaf and dumb, who hath been immediately cured by the Application of a small piece of Paper, in which, among other magical Words and Characters, were the Numbers 500 or 1000, or more or less, according to the Nature of the Case and the Necessities of the Patient, upon the immediate Perusal of the Charm, he could hear distinctly, and speak fluently upon any Question or Side of a Question, for

a whole Hour by the Clock: And because some incredulous ill-natur'd People were for suspecting the Reality of the Cure, and imputing the whole to a Politic Collusion betwixt the Doctor and the Patient, he has been prevailed upon to try the Efficacy of the Charm in a different and contrary Experiment, and has, for the Conviction of the Incredulous, by the same Charm, with some little Variation of Characters, struck a Man at once absolutely deaf, and dumb, and blind, who had been but just before in full Possession of his Health, Understanding, Memory and Senses. Nay, more than this, I have been credibly informed, that a Patient, languishing, and almost expiring under an universal Decay, from a Complication of Disorders, was at once restored, by *the Force of Numbers*, without any visible Application at all made to the Patient, to perfect Health and Soundness of Body. And that others, who had been over-run with an Irruption of malignant Humours breaking out, and stinking like Plague Sores, were, by the *sole Power of Numbers* made as sound as Heart of Oak, and as sweet as a Rose, with numberless other Cures too tedious to mention, which may be well attested, to the Satisfaction of any curious Enquirer. I cannot say that I saw these wonderful Operations myself, or ever examined the State or Constitution of the Patients so restored; but, which is equally satisfactory to men of modest and ingenuous Tempers, I was assured of it upon the Honour of those who per-

performed the several above mentioned Cures, and gave the Patients constant Attendance till they were compleated, being upon the fair and honourable Conditions of, *No Cure no Pay*, who therefore must be presumed to be the most proper Judges in the Case. It was something like this that gave a Handle to a merry old Senator in the Dyet of *Poland* to make an unlucky Reply in a Debate upon a Question in which he was deeply interested, and had engaged a great Majority to carry it. A grave Gentleman in the Opposition, who could read in his Bible, quoted a Passage out of the Book of *Leviticus* to support an Argument he had been advancing against the Question; to which the facetious Droll replied, *There seems indeed, Sir, to be something of Weight in the Passage you have quoted from Leviticus, but it will do your Cause very little Service, for we have the whole Book of Numbers against you.*

Pardon this Digression. — But the Use I would make of it is this: If Arithmetic be capable of such prodigious Improvements, and so apparently calculated for the publick Good, what should hinder us from attempting something like it by Way of Improvement in the Exercise of our *Reason*; especially considering, that our Adversaries have given us a fair Opportunity of taking an Advantage of their Negligence. They have been all along so confident of the Goodness of their Cause, and so secure of their own superior Strength and Cunning, that they have wantonly neglected to se-

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cure themselves, by using their Interest to procure a legal and Parliamentary Establishment, which, like the Act of Uniformity, might oblige all his Majesty's loving Subjects, to conform to their Rules and Methods of *Reasoning*, and prohibit them under severe Penalties from making Use of any other. This would effectually have precluded any Attempts of this kind that I am proposing; but since they have neglected to do this, I think we ought to exert all our Interest and Cunning to turn it to our own Advantage. I am not sanguine enough to imagine we have Interest enough at present to procure such an Establishment for any System of our own, in opposition to the prevailing Prepossession; such a Scheme, if at all feasible, must be a very remote Possibility, and the Object of a very distant Hope. Our Superiors at present are apparently prejudiced in favour of ancient and immemorial Custom, and long Prescription, and jealous of making or encouraging Innovations; but as they have been always ready to lend an indulgent Ear to the dutiful Remonstrances and Petitions of their Inferiors, and to give them such Relief and Indulgence as their Circumstances may require, it will not be improper to lay before the Publick, at least, a just and impartial Account of the Difficulties and Hardships under which we labour, and from which we hope to be relieved. In general, they are so unreasonable, as to object against almost all our Methods of Reasoning, as uncanonical and unstatutable, and quarrel

quarrel with us for taking some few little Liberties, which would apparently give us some Advantage; and, to shew the Perverseness of their Spirit, will neither use them themselves, nor suffer us to use them. I shall only instance in two or three Cases, whereby you may judge of the rest.

1. It very often happens in the Course of a Debate, when the Advantage is apparently on our Side, they turn short upon us, and tell us, *We beg the Question*; marry, and a good Shift too, I think, if we can carry an important Question purely by begging. Sure I am, that if this Method could be brought to any Perfection, it would be a more saving Article to the Publick than the Sinking Fund, and therefore we may reasonably hope, that our Superiors, who will find their Account in it as well as we, will find out proper Ways and Means to allow, confirm, and secure us in this Method of Reasoning, as it is apparently more useful in many difficult Cases, than all their Rules of Logic put together.

2. At other Times, when they find themselves sorely pinch'd, and almost giddy by running round with us, as it were in a Ring, they grow fretful, and cry out against *Circular Proof*. This Objection is peevish and absurd. Do not these Gentlemen know that a *Circle* is the most perfect of all Figures? and by Consequence, that a *Circular* Operation must be so too? Is not the Frame of Nature supported by the *Circulation* of the several Parts of the

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System? Is not the Life of all Animals and Vegetables preserved by the *Circulation* of their Blood and Juices? Has not the Credit and Interest of the Nation been often preserved by the *Circulation* of Bank and Exchequer Bills? Has not the Credit of the several Stocks and Funds been known to rise and fall by the *Circulation* even of a *Lye*? to the great Advantage of several eminent and well-disposed Persons, who would have startled at the Sound of a trifling insignificant malicious *Lye*, when there was nothing to be got by it. Nay, further, is not a *Circulation* of Interest the great Support of Government? Could any Ministry subsist without it? Nay, I will venture to affirm, that without such a *Circulation*, many a good Question in Politics would have been lost, and why it should be thought unlawful and unreasonable for us to take the Benefit of it in Matters of Philosophy and Religion, is to me quite unconceivable.

3. But the merriest Imposition of all, is that of confining us to the Use of three Terms, and telling us that it is against all the Laws of Logic to add a fourth. A very pretty Contrivance truly! They know that four is a Majority to three, and therefore modestly enjoin us not to take the Benefit of Numbers, by which they very well know the weightiest Questions are carried in the most august Assemblies in the World.

These are some of the many Hardships under which we labour, and from which we hope
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in due time to be relieved, by the Wisdom and Authority of some future Parliament : But till this can be effectually done, we have a modest Proposal to make to the Publick, in which we hope for the Attention and Indulgence of proper Judges.— The present Age is justly famous, and will be so to late Posterity, for the publick Spirit it has shown in encouraging and rewarding great and useful Designs and Undertakings, worthy the Regard of a Wise and Powerful Nation. What a glorious Reward has been settled by the Authority of Parliament for the Discovery of the Longitude? How many Patents have been procured! How many Subscriptions set on foot for the Inventers and Improvers of any useful Branch of Science, Trade and Manufacture! But nothing has yet been done of a publick Nature for the Encouragement of new Improvements in the Way of Reasoning, Arguing, or Disputing, which are very much wanted on our Side of the Question. Now, there are TWO great Articles which our Adversaries have wantonly rejected as useless and impracticable, have over and over again absolutely disclaimed any Pre- tence, Kind or Degree of Right, Title, Property or Use in them; and therefore they may, by a competent Authority, be fairly assigned, made over, confirmed to us and our Heirs or Assigns for ever, and a Patent be drawn to entitle us to all the Profits, Advantages and Emoluments that shall at any time arise or proceed from a proper Use and Improvement

of the said TWO Articles, in the Manner of *The Mine Adventurers, The Wreck-Fishery, or The Discoverers of new Countries.* And these are,

I. The Proof of Negatives.

II. The Reconciling Contradictions.

These two Points have been long considered not only as *Desiderata* but as *Desperata*, by the generality of the learned; and therefore every Attempt to clear, recover, and explain these very difficult Branches of Knowledge, and make them useful to the Interests of Society, ought to entitle the Adventurers to the equitable Favour and Indulgence of the Publick.— As to the *first* then, I would humbly propose, That the sole Power of *proving Negatives* may be entirely vested in US, *i. e.* in a select Number of Gentlemen, in trust for the whole Body, when we shall be hereafter formed into a regular Society, in as full and absolute a Manner as the *Probat* of Wills is in the Ecclesiastical Courts. I expect to be ask'd, *But how shall this be done?* — Done! Never fear: The same Authority that gives us a Right to the End, gives us also a Right to the Means: He that gives us an absolute and unlimited Power, leaves us the sole Judges of the Ways and Means by which it is to be executed. You cannot be so weak as to imagine we shall ever attempt it by the ordinary Rules of the Vulgar and Popular Logic; these, you know, we absolutely disclaim, and are therefore projecting a Scheme, and soliciting an Establishment in direct Opposition

position to theirs ; and if ever this can be procured in a Legal and Parliamentary Way, it immediately entitles us to the only Legal and Parliamentary Method of Proof both in Civil and Ecclesiastical Courts, which is an *Oath*. Every body knows that a Will is of no Validity or Force, till it be duly proved in the proper Court upon the Oath of the *Executor*, that from thenceforth it has the Force and Power of a *Testamentary Record*, and being deposited in the proper Office remains an unalterable Statute or Decree, like *the Laws of the Medes and Persians*. In the same manner, I would humbly propose, that by virtue of the above-said Grant or Patent, a certain Office may be erected, under the Direction of some select Members of our Society, who shall be called, *The Commissioners of the Negative Office*, and be invested with full Power and Authority to make or receive, from time to time, due and legal Proof of such kind of Negatives, whether in Religion, Law, or Politics, as the Necessity of publick or private Affairs may require, which shall from thenceforth be considered as Matters of perpetual and unalterable Record, and being deposited in proper Cells, Cabinets, Rooms, or Repositories, like those in the *Tower of London*, shall, upon proper Occasions, be produced as undeniable Evidence, in any Debate or Controversy, upon Religious Subjects, or any Matter or Cause depending in Parliament, or any of his Majesty's Courts of Law or Justice, against which no Exception,

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Protection, or Wager at Law, shall in any Cause, or on any Pretence, be allowed. And as this will be a Matter of great Advantage to our Society in particular, so we propose to make it as extensive and beneficial to the Public as possible: For this Purpose, we intend to erect a large and commodious Building in some convenient Place within the City of *Westminster*, for the better Regulation and Management of the above-said *Negative Office*, and Reception and Accommodation of the *Commissioners*, a certain Number of whom shall be obliged to reside and give constant Attendance during the four several Law-Terms, and the Sessions of Parliament, for the more easy and convenient Supply of such Kinds and Quantities of Negatives, duly proved and stamp'd according to Law, as shall be required, for the more speedy and effectual Dispatch of either public or private Affairs. And as the entire *Manufacture and Property of Negatives* will be vested in our Society, so we propose farther to supply the Publick at a much cheaper and easier Rate than has hitherto been done, by the usual irregular Methods of Proceeding. We have been credibly informed, that, for want of such Regulations as we have projected, certain evil-minded People, cunningly foreseeing that there would be a great Demand for *Negatives*, upon certain weighty and urgent Occasions, had maliciously contrived to monopolize and engross the whole Commodity into very few Hands, who, taking the Advantage of the publick Necessity,

ceffity, combined together to raife them to a moft exorbitant Price, infomuch, that, (if we are not mifinformed) fome Perfons, who were under an unavoidable Neceffity of purchafing at any Rate, were forced to pay more than 90 *per cent.* above the intrinfick Value. This is a Grievance of a publick Nature, which calls aloud for Redrefs, and which for the future we propofe intirely to prevent, by fupplying any Perfon from time to time with fmall Quantities, or even fingle ones, upon urgent Ocafions, at very cheap and reasonable Rates, with proper Allowance to thofe who take a Quantity, and a large Drawback to be made to thofe who fhall make due Proof that they are purchafed folely for the Benefit of the Publick, either at home, or in any of our foreign Plantations, for whose Relief and Benefit this Scheme is principally calculated and intended.

Nor is the Article of *Reconciling Contradictions* of lefs Confequence to us and the Publick, than that of *proving Negatives*, being both abfolutely neceffary for the Support of our Society, and by Confequence for the Welfare of the Publick. I mean fuch *Contradictions* as are generally and vulgarly fo called, and efteemed as oppofite as Black and White, as Light and Darknefs. And thefe are of two Sorts, 1. Religious. 2. Political. — Of the former I have a long Lift now lying before me, fome *direct*, or in *Terms*, others *indirect*, or *confequential*; on the clearing and reconciling of which the Intereft and Credit of our Society greatly

greatly depends. And forasmuch as this cannot easily be done by the ordinary Rules of the vulgar Logic, we are therefore compelled to have Recourse to such Ways and Means as the Favour of our Superiors, and the Powers to be conveyed to us by our future Grant or Patent shall allow. We humbly propose therefore, that in one Part of the Structure to be hereafter built for the Use of the *Negative Office*, another Office shall be erected by the Name of the *Contradiction Office*, under the Direction of proper Persons who shall be called the *Commissioners* of the said Office. Their Business shall be to collect and digest under proper Heads and distinct Classes, such apparent Contradictions as have at any time within such a certain Term of Years, (to be directly specified and expressed) been publish'd and defended by any great and learned Prelate, or other eminent Divine, without a legal and judicial Animadversion, either from the Convocation, their proper Diocesan, either House of Parliament, or some one of his Majesty's Courts in *Westminster-Hall*; it being a reasonable Presumption, if they were really and truly *Contradictions* to their own Sentiments, (at other Times written, publish'd and defended) to the known Sense of Mankind, and the Laws of the Land, they could not have escaped such Censure and Animadversions from their Superiors, the Omission of which ought to be a certain and indubitable Proof to all Persons of Modesty and Ingenuity, that they were not really

really such Contradictions as this Case supposes, nor merited any such Censure or Animadversion; and therefore, that the Silence of such Superiors may be reasonably supposed to amount to an Approbation, grounded on the Laws of the Land, the Interest of the Publick, or the real Truth and Nature of Things. That each of these being fairly and severally drawn out, engrossed and attested, under the Seal and Sign-manual of the proper Officers of the Commission, shall be produced in any Matter of Religious Debate or Controversy, and pleaded with the same Force as Precedents, or adjudged Cases in Law or Equity, and that a Case so stated, signed and attested by the proper Officers, shall be allowed as direct Proof upon any given Question, against which no Objection shall be made, or Exception legally taken. Such a Regulation as this we humbly presume will be of singular Use to several eminent Persons, who will hereby be discharged from any Necessity of attempting to reconcile any apparent Contradictions betwixt *Interest* and *Conscience*; *Subscriptions* and *Doctrine*, or *Doctrine* and *Practice*, into which they may have been betrayed in the several Gradations of their Studies and Promotions; and will be at the same time of infinite Service to others, who shall at any time hereafter be compelled to make use of the same Means, in pursuit of the same Ends: And for the greater Encouragement of all such Ecclesiastical Persons as shall have Recourse to our Office, for

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such attested Copies, &c. they shall receive them *gratis*, without Fee or Reward, as an Acknowledgment of the unspeakable Service they have done to our Society, under the Mask of a direct and avowed Opposition,

As for *Political Contradictions*, they are of two Sorts: *Doctrinal* or *Practical*, both which are unavoidable in the Course of a long perplex'd unsteady Administration, such as often has, and often hereafter may happen in this, as well as other Kingdoms and Countries. Of these too I have a long List lying before me, — *Sed Cynthia aurem vellit* — which, as they are not to be reconciled by the popular and vulgar Forms of Logick and Argumentation, must of necessity have Recourse to other Methods; if therefore any such Contradictions have been at any time reconciled by a Majority of Votes in either House of Parliament, such Contradictions so reconciled, shall be forthwith entered in our Office, and be deemed and considered as Matters of perpetual and unalterable Record. And if any Minister should be so unhappy as to be push'd by an Opposition, to reconcile any contradictory Speeches or Measures which shall be maliciously laid to his Charge, he shall in every such Case apply himself to our Office, for a *Writ of Reconciliation* of the afore said *Contradiction*; which being signed and sealed by the Majority of our Commissioners, and duly stamp'd in such manner as the Law shall direct, shall from that time be deemed a legal Protection, and be effectually pleaded

pleaded in bar to any malicious retrospective Enquiries into any *contradictory Speeches, Affirmations, Declarations, Promises or Practices* of the said Minister, on whose Generosity we shall depend for such a valuable Compensation as his particular Circumstances may require and admit, and our seasonable and necessary Assistance may be reasonably thought to deserve.

You see, Dear Sir, a rough and imperfect Draught of my general Scheme, which I entirely submit to your Correction. I shall only add a Word or two, 1. To shew its Excellency and Usefulness, and how much more reasonable it is than that of our Adversaries. 2. To give a few general Hints to all our Friends, which may be useful in the Prosecution of our great Design.

The Excellency of our general Scheme appears in this, that it is reasonable, regular and consistent: Our Foundation is laid upon good *Terra firma*, where our Settlement lies, the Interests and Enjoyments of which are the Objects of all our Senses, which *Senses* (as the Believers themselves acknowledge) are * *infallible*: And therefore, whilst we give up ourselves to the Direction of our Senses, we are under the Direction of five or six *infallible Guides*. And what can any reasonable Man desire more to keep him in the Right Way? The Perceptions of these infallible Guides are so vivid and strong, their Light so glaring, their Evidence so irresistible, that all Mankind are agreed to

* Sensus non possunt falli.

call it *Common Sense*; and the Inferences, Conclusions and Deductions drawn from them is called *Reason*; for all Men agree that *Reason* presupposes and depends upon *Common Sense*, and cannot subsist without it. So far we are safe under infallible Direction; and here our Guides advise us to sit down and enjoy ourselves, and make the most of the present; but if we be restless and uneasy, and want to be making further Discoveries, they refuse to go with us, and leave us to grope out our Way by ourselves, through Darkness and Uncertainty; which we think to be a bold and dangerous Adventure, and therefore are resolved to know when we are well, and run no Hazard in Pursuit of Uncertainties.

But the *Believing Scheme* is the direct contrary to all this: No visible Foundation; no infallible Direction; all is Fiction, Chimæra and Romance; their Structure is like a *Cone*, or a *Pyramid inverted*, the *Base* of which is at an invisible and infinite Distance above the Clouds, and its *Vertex* terminating in some little indivisible Point of Brute Matter: So that instead of the regular and natural Ascent from the Bottom to the Top, their Progression is from the Top to the Bottom, like those bold Adventurers, who fly down a Rope from the Top of a Church-Steeple, or like wanton Girls that crawl down Stairs with their Heads foremost, to the manifest Hazard of their Noses, if not of their Necks. In short, the one is infallibly safe and certain, so far as it goes:
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The other is full of Terror, Uncertainty, and Danger. It is therefore the Interest of Mankind to know when they are well, to keep in the safe Way, to run no hazard in pursuit of invisible fairy Treasures, but thankfully to enjoy the numberless Pleasures that are ready provided to their hands; and to convince and persuade the silly credulous Part of our Species to do the same, is the highest Act of Benevolence to our Fellow-Creatures. And as this is principally intended for the benefit of the next Age, there being very little hope of making more Converts in this, our first and great Concern must be to prevent the fatal Impressions of Prejudice and Superstition that may be made upon the Minds of the growing Generation. For this end we must exert all our Interest and Power to discourage and suppress the numberless *Charity and Grammar Schools* erected in all Parts of these Kingdoms. The Minds of Children are tender and flexible, apt to receive and retain any Impressions that may be made upon them by the Affection or Authority of their Teachers and Governors, and when these are applied to flatter their natural Vanity, under pretence of informing their Understanding, no wonder they are easily admitted, and with great Difficulty if ever erased out of their Minds. Here, forsooth, they are taught fine Lessons of the Dignity of human Nature, and the glorious Prerogatives of immortal Souls; they are told that the great Difference between Man and Man, does not depend upon the Distinctions

distinctions of Birth or Fortune, but upon the
 imaginary Excellencies of superior Knowledge,
 Probity, Piety, and a Sense of Religion; that
 therefore a *pious Beggar* is better than an *un-
 godly Squire*, and that a *poor believing Labourer*
 is more excellent in the Sight of God than an
unbelieving Lord, and that whatever Figure
 they may either of them make, whatever For-
 tune either of them may meet with here, in
 the next World all shall be set right; that the
 humble, faithful, persevering Christian, shall
 there enjoy an eternal State of unspeakable Hap-
 piness, whilst their ungodly Superiors shall be
 doomed to endless Misery and Despair. These
 fine Notions so agreeable to the natural Vani-
 ty of Mankind, tend to destroy all that neces-
 sary Subordination on which the Peace and
 Order of Society is known to depend. This
 spirits up the lower part of Mankind to re-
 nounce that reasonable Dependance and Sub-
 jection, which they naturally owe to their Su-
 periors in Birth and Fortune, and makes them
 forget that they were intended for nothing
 higher than to be Vassals and Beasts of Bur-
 den to their Betters, whose Will and Pleasure
 ought to be the sole Rule and Measure of their
 religious, moral, political, and social Conduct.
 No wonder, therefore, they are so tenacious of
 those religious Principles, which seem to raise
 them from their original Obscurity, and set
 them upon a level with the best part of Man-
 kind. This is a bad Story, but this is not the
 worst. Our Universities are the Bane and Pest
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of the Nation ; there the fond indigested Principles of the Nurse, the Grand-mother, the School-dame, and the Parson, are formed into Systems, and so deeply riveted in the Heads and Hearts of the young People, that not one in a thousand has the Courage to contradict or oppose them. Here they are quickly taught the Art of Wrangling, by which they pretend to justify these ridiculous Systems, and even to act offensively against the prevailing Principles and Practices of the polite World, and especially if they get into holy Orders (as they call 'em,) and a Cure of Souls, they grow sawcy and unsupportable to People of Taste and Figure, infomuch that I have known a *mere Country Parson*, who hardly knew the Difference betwixt a Pointer and a Setting-dog, pretend to be as wise as a *Justice of the Quorum*, or even as *the Lord of the Manor*. — And further, to shew their irreconcilable Aversion to our Principles and Society, they have erected in each University a *Protestant Inquisition*, in which they pretend to judge, censure, and punish such of their Members as have Sense and Courage enough to oppose their Systems of Religion and Orthodoxy, and write or speak of our Side of the Question : Witness the outrageous Persecution of a few honest, inquisitive, penetrating Gentlemen about seven Years ago at *Trinity College in Oxford*, and the late barbarous Usage of some of our Friends this very Year at *Cambridge*. When we justly charge all this upon the Ignorance, the Pride, the per-

persecuting Spirit of Priests, who are in all Religions, the same stupid, insolent, domineering Tyrants, whenever they are trusted with Power; they immediately insult us with a long Bead-roll of illustrious Names, such as *Bacon, Boyle, Pascal, Grotius, Clarendon, Nelson, Locke, Addison, Newton, Cheyne, &c.* who, tho' Laymen, yet believed as heartily, and wrote as learnedly in defence of their Superstition as any Priest of them all. — Ay, and a very good Reason may be given for it; they had all been bred up in the same dull Way, had suck'd in the same early Prejudices with their Mothers Milk, had run through the Pedantry of Grammar Schools, and were thence sent to receive the finishing Stroke of orthodox Stupidity at these Universities. Had these Gentlemen had a *modern polite Education*, we should have seen them in a different way of thinking, writing, and acting, and perhaps as avowed Enemies to Priestcraft and Superstition, as any of our Society; always applying that Golden Saying of *John Dryden's*, *That Priests of all Religions are the same.* So long therefore as these Universities subsist and flourish, we have little reason to expect any good: Our Interests and Principles are incompatible with theirs; either they must sink, or we must suffer; till they fall, we can have no reasonable Hope of rising to any tolerable degree of Credit or Power, much less to an Establishment. We must therefore, upon all Occasions, bear our Testimony loudly against them; we must display

play and aggravate the Secret, as well as known Irregularities of those Jesuitical Societies; not forgetting especially the late Affair at *Wadham* College; and strongly insinuate something more than bare Suspicions of the same or greater Guilt in others, who are so cunning at present as to conceal it from the World; and at the same time take care among our intimate Friends, to lash these impertinent Pedants for their unmannerly Behaviour to a worthy learned Gentleman, for doing no more than his Betters have done before him, and which upon our Principle of *natural Religion*, we are able and ready to defend and justify †. Thus we have them under the lash on both sides of the Question. *The Guilt* (if it be a Crime,) or *the barbarous Severity*, (if it were none) *must be charged upon the whole Society*. And what a Handle does this give us to condemn them all in the gross, as Enemies of Liberty, and Seminaries of Slavery and Superstition, where no Person of Taste, Rank, or Figure, should venture to trust their Children for Education? No, no, let them, if it be necessary and feasible, learn to read and write, and spell at home, let due Care be taken to keep them in good Health, and Spirits, by such Exercises as are fit for their Age and Quality, that they may not grow low-spirited, sickly, and superstitious, by too much Confinement, Reading, and other ungentleman-like Employments. When they are of a proper Age, let them be brought to Town,

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† *Vide Rights of the Church*, Page 264.

and introduced into the best Company at the *Playhouse*, the *Opera*, the *Masquerade*, the *Chocolate-House*, the *Bagnio*, the *Tavern*, &c. And when they are sufficiently glutted with the Wit and Gallantries of their own Country; then, if it be thought expedient, and their Constitution and Fortune will bear it, let them travel, make the Tour of *Europe* with a decent Equipage, under the Direction of a *French* or *Swiss Valet-de-Chambre*, but not be confined to the narrow, pedantick Rules of Priests, who have the Vanity to be called *Governours*, and behave accordingly. Let them be sure to keep an exact Journal of all the memorable Events that shall befall them, and all the Curiosities they may meet with in their March, particularly where they met with the best Wine, and the finest Women, what Countesses or Dutchesses kept the most brilliant Assembly, how many *Billets-doux* they wrote and received, how many Intrigues upon their hands with Ladies of the first Quality in all the Courts of *Europe*, how many Rencontres with Marquisses, Counts, and Dukes, in honour of the Fair. Let them besides keep a Catalogue of the most celebrated Courtesans, Fiddlers, Singers and Painters; let them pick up all the Stories of vicious Priests, and lewd Nuns; let them learn to be very arch upon the ridiculous Pageantry, and legendary Tales of the *Romish* Worship, with proper Innuendo's of Parallels at home. And when they have gleaned up a tolerable Taste of

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Modern Languages, and made a decent Collection of *Modern Antiquities*, Paintings, Bustos, Coins, and Medals, then let them return home laden with Politeness and Experience, for the Honour and Service of their own Country, and ten thousand to one but we have them Body and Soul in the Interest of our Society.

I have insensibly drawn this Epistle into a greater Length than I intended, and fear I have tired your Patience. I have but one word more to add, to which I am sure you will take no Exception——that I conclude,

Dear Sir,

Your's.



(77)
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Fuppelle un chat un chat: & Rolet un Fripon.

BOILEAU.

